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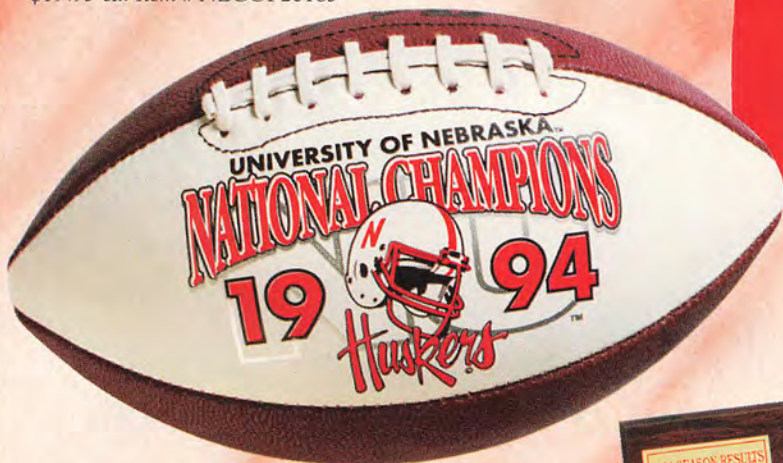
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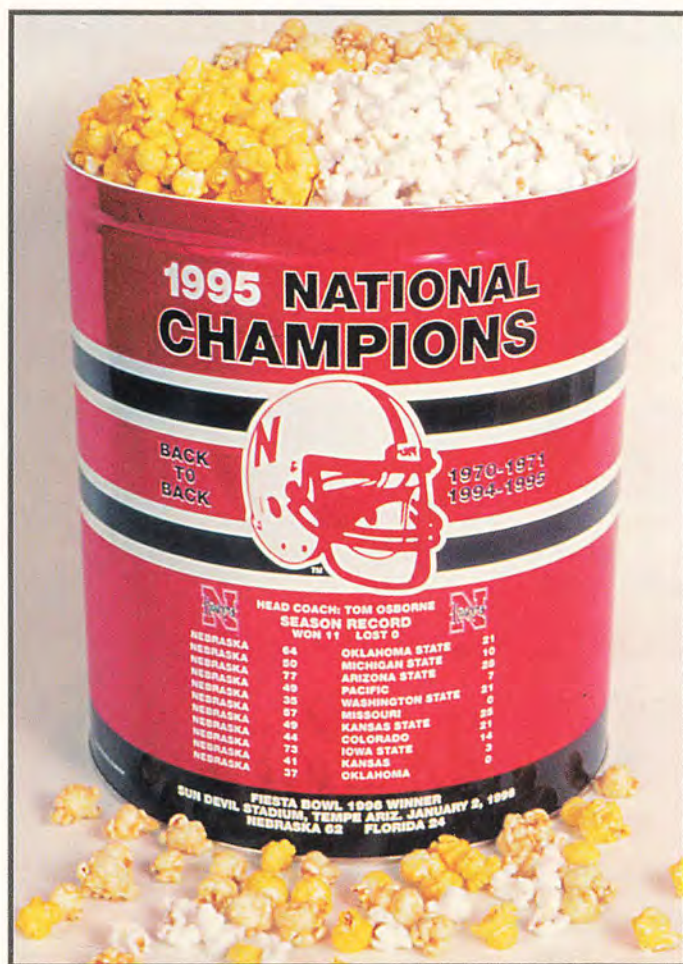
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PUBLISHER

Robert Bennett

**EDITORIAL & OPERATIONS
COORDINATOR**

Chris Greer

PRODUCTION

Jeff Cannon, Homer Jacobs, Blain Fowler,

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Mike Babcock, Mark Derowitsch, Steve
Sipple, James Hale, Nebraska Sports
Information Office

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Bob Berry, John Mummert, Michael Chow

SALES MANAGER

Moses Padron

**SPORTS MARKETING
& ADVERTISING DIRECTOR**

Jeff Tudor

**ADVERTISING & MARKETING
COORDINATOR**

Todd McVeigh

CIRCULATION

Ann Johnston

ACCOUNTING

Kathleen Newton, Carolyn Rhodes

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E-Mail Addresses

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Editor: huskiesedit@xcscx.com

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ON THE COVER

Ahman Green by Bob Berry



Why don't the Cornhuskers join the trend and switch to a natural grass playing field? Artificial turf is being proven to be more dangerous than grass. It is a lot easier for a player's ankle or knee to catch and buckle on turf where as grass will give and cause a lot fewer injuries. Not only that, it is a lot cheaper to install natural grass instead of turf. There is more maintenance involved, but it is well worth it to protect the athletes. Plus, football just looks better when its played on a grass surface. Let the players' uniforms get a little dirty.

I live in University of Michigan territory, and they recently switched to a natural grass surface, and from what I've read from reviews by the players and coaches, it's been nothing but positive.

I know critics say that playing on turf speeds up the game and by

switching to grass will slow it down. But think about it — if it slows the game down for their team, won't it slow it down for the opponent as well? Plus, most major bowl games are played on grass and sports critics say that playing on turf all year and then switching over to grass is a very big disadvantage for the Cornhuskers.

I would like to see Nebraska scrap that old carpet and get a natural grass playing surface as soon as possible.

Anthony J. Tenorio
Westland, Mich.

What happened to the Nebraska basketball team? In the last magazine, you guys were talking about how they were a "dominant power in the Big Eight" and were headed to the NCAA. That may have been the case two weeks ago, but since then, the team has gone in the toilet and players are asking for the coaches' head.

I was so excited about the prospect of a great season in which the rest of

the Big Eight was down. Too bad we joined that group and were never a factor.

Steve McNickle
Omaha, Neb.

Please send your comments and questions to **Letters**, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501. Or fax them to us at (214) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length.

I am 12 weeks old. My first Nebraska game was Oct. 27 against Colorado when I was two days old. My dad and family have been following the Huskers for over 25 years. I have listened to every game since I was born. I will always be a Husker fan and hope someday I will be playing on that field. My dad does, too.

I would like to surprise my dad by having my picture in his favorite magazine to thank him for letting me experience the Big Red team.

Christopher Pierson Conradt
Yorba Linda, Calif.



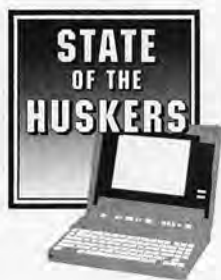
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Staying Afloat

Despite a smaller pool of academically available student-athletes, Nebraska has been able to keep its head above water



**By
MIKE
BABCOCK**

The setting was a large tent outside Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz., following Nebraska's 62-24 victory in the Fiesta Bowl.

Tom Osborne had just been presented a second consecutive national trophy, thanks to a team regarded by some as

the best in college football history. He was making introductory remarks before answering the questions of reporters who were stunned by the ease with which the Cornhuskers had dispatched second-ranked Florida.

"One more comment," Osborne said after noting that, in addition to everything else, Nebraska probably had come out "a little ahead in the kicking game" against the hapless Gators.

"I'd like to say this respectfully to the Big 12 presidents. I hope they'll take a look at the fact that we (Big Eight schools) had four teams in the top 10, and we did it with Big Eight rules. We hope very much that they will reconsider and try to let the Big 12 play with Big Eight rules and not change things because we think it makes for a strong conference."

The Big 12 CEOs didn't reconsider, however. Barely a week later, they voted to prohibit academic non-qualifiers (as defined by the NCAA) from competing in varsity athletics without first attending junior college. In addition, they voted to limit the number of partial qualifiers who could be signed in a given year to four, two male and two female. Only one of those two male student-athletes could be a football player.

Later in the post-Fiesta Bowl interview session, Cornhusker outside linebacker Jared Tomich offered his opinion of the eligibility standards being considered by the Big 12 presidents. "I hope they would keep that just the way it is," he said.

Tomich, a walkon from St. John, Ind., had to sit out a year after graduating from high school because he didn't meet freshman eligibility requirements under what was originally the NCAA's Proposition 48.

"If they change things like that, a player like myself and many other players . . . wouldn't get a chance to do what we can academically or on the field," said Tomich, a junior All-American.

In mid-December, Texas indicat-

Bob Berry



Under current academic guidelines, players such as All-American Jared Tomich, a former Prop 48 casualty, may never get a chance.

ed it might withdraw from the Big 12 if academic non-qualifiers could be recruited. The Longhorns could have left the conference without significant penalty, and apparently, they have a standing offer to join the Pac-10, as does Colorado. So the threat was real.

The Big 12 vote to exclude non-qualifiers was 11-1. Nebraska cast the lone dissenting vote.

The Big Eight has allowed member institutions to establish their own entrance requirements, with athletic eligibility determined by NCAA rules.

Those rules became more stringent this year. The "core" courses have been increased from 11 to 13, and they have been made more specific. The minimum grade-point

average in those core courses has been increased from 2.0 to 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, and the minimum standardized test scores have been increased to 820 on the SAT and 17 on the ACT. Actually, the ACT requirement is now 68, a total of the scores on the four sections of the test instead of the average, thereby eliminating the possibility of rounding up to a 17 what would have been an average of 16.5.

The NCAA has established a sliding scale so that a student-athlete can have a cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 and still qualify, providing he or she scored higher than the minimum on a standardized test. The sliding scale likely will have little or no positive effect, however.

Under Big 12 rules, an academic non-qualifier can compete in athletics at a member institution only after earning a junior college degree — subject to additional NCAA requirements that could force a transfer to sit out one year at a four-year institution before being eligible.

The state of Texas has an extensive junior college system, which means Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Baylor will be at less of a disadvantage in recruiting than Nebraska because of Big 12 rules regarding academic non-qualifiers.

"There are some built-in advantages (for some schools)," Osborne said. Even so, "as far as our being able to function, we're not going to slow down at all," he said.

The increased NCAA requirements "eliminated about one-third of the Division I football and basketball players who could be recruited. The pool is smaller," Osborne said. "I think, probably, schools like Nebraska will be OK. I don't think the quality (of recruits) dropped off a bit. It was just a little harder."

Changing the rules won't affect Nebraska's success. The Big 12 can't legislate against the hard work and attention to detail that have produced the Cornhuskers' back-to-back titles. ■

Staying Power

Receivers coach Ron Brown turns down NFL job

The stability of the coaching staff is among the many significant factors in Nebraska's winning back-to-back national championships in football (*Huskers Illustrated*, Sept. 30, 1995). Such stability can be jeopardized, however, by that success, with increased opportunities to go elsewhere.

Kevin Steele, for example, left Nebraska after the 1994 season to become an assistant for the expansion Carolina Panthers of the National Football League. He was replaced by former Cornhusker Craig Bohl, and Nebraska never missed a beat. But there's always a danger of a dropoff.

Cornhusker receivers coach Ron Brown was offered an assistant's job with the NFL's

Tampa Bay Buccaneers after Tony Dungy was hired as their head coach in January. Brown, like Tom Osborne's other assistants, has had other offers during his nine years. But it would take a lot to get anyone to leave the staff, Brown said in announcing, in mid-February, that, after much deliberation, he had decided to remain at Nebraska.

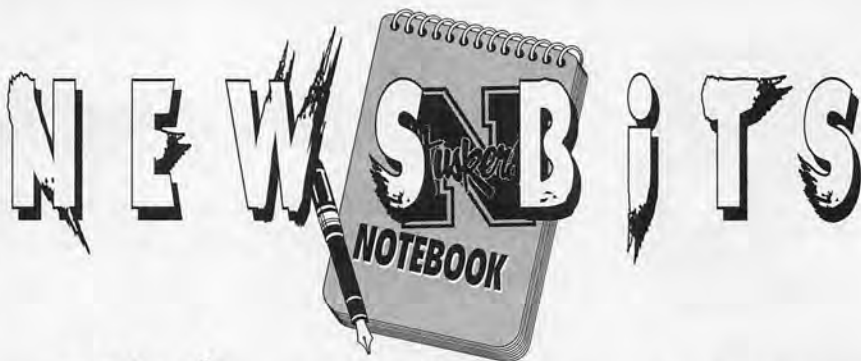
"I feel like it's God's will for me to be here," said Brown, whose association with Dungy was a result, in part, of the active involvement of both of them in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Brown cited his own Christian ministry as one of the reasons he decided to remain at Nebraska. The high-profile status afforded him as a result of the Cornhuskers' success has enhanced that ministry. Brown has established Christian camps for underprivileged children in four Nebraska communities and has plans for a fifth.

His wife and daughter also significantly influenced his decision, Brown said, as did the continued opportunity to work for Osborne, a "great head coach and a man I truly have respect for."



Brown returns for 10th year at Nebraska.



Video Visionary

As some Nebraska fans learned last season — and others have known since the early 1970s — there's nothing quite like watching the Huskers win a national championship.

But there are plenty of other important NU games that most die-hard fans would love to watch: regular-season games from the national champs of 1970 and 1971, the 1941 Rose Bowl and contests from the 1983 "Scoring Explosion" team, just to name a few.

Videotapes of recent and older games are now available from Husker Video. Headed by Mike Osborne, coach Tom Osborne's son, Husker Video has been working with the University of Nebraska's football film archives since 1993, making copies of game films that fans can purchase.

The younger Osborne got the idea to do something in 1992, the same year his company was founded. Husker Video's initial business was videotaping Nebraska games, adding radio broadcasts to the game tapes and selling the complete package to subscribers.

The company took off as subscriber lists grew, and many subscribers began requesting tapes of older games. Osborne originally planned to convert the 1970 and 1971 championship seasons and the 1983 "Scoring Explosion" team to video. But the archives turned out to be much more expansive than originally believed.

"We decided to pick the games that were big wins for Nebraska, turning points, big losses for Nebraska against a really big-name team or the first bowl game," Osborne said.

The earliest game is the 1941 Rose Bowl, Nebraska's first bowl game. There are a few games in the late 1940s and a few in the 1950s. The games from the early '50s on are generally complete.

"The 1970s and 1980s are pretty complete but some games were borrowed, and they failed to return them," Sorley said.

The tapes are not television broadcasts, but copies of films used by coaches. The films have no replays and usually no sound. Unfortunately, there are no audio broadcasts available for most of the older games.

"Most people are very interested in having former Voice of the Nebraska Cornhuskers Lyle Bremser on some of those older games," Osborne said. "Unfortunately, none of those exist."

Providing these games has been difficult. Osborne thought that it would take three months to complete the 120 older games, but that time frame wasn't realistic because converting the films and videos to the master tape took too much time.

Because of quality problems, Husker Video rates the tapes from "A" to "F," with an A being the best and an F the worst.

To receive a catalog call 1-800-230-3831. ■ — Rick Kelsey



Matt Walte

Mike Osborne follows in his dad's footsteps by bringing entertainment (in his case, it's in video form) to Nebraska football fans.

Heavyweight Thompson and team shoot for NCAA titles

Tolly Time

Pressure-packed situations are nothing new for Nebraska junior Tolly Thompson on the wrestling mat. He has dealt with the stress before and knows what he has to do to succeed.

That's why the NCAA Championships — which will be held March 21-24 at the Target Center in Minneapolis — don't scare Thompson.

The reason? He has already been through an NCAA meet and last year emerging from the meet as a national champion.

Thompson, a native of Janesville, Iowa, entered the NCAA meet a year ago as the second ranked heavyweight, but went 5-0 to become the first underclassmen in school history to win a title.

He's also on pace to repeat.

"I think he's the best heavyweight in the nation right now," Nebraska coach Tim Neumann said of Thompson. "He had a little down period early in the year, but he has trained fantastically over the last two months.

"It's going to take something more than what's out there to beat him at the NCAA Championships. I don't want to put added pressure on him, but I think he expects to win, too."

But it will take more than just the effort of Thompson if the Huskers have any chance of unseating Iowa as the team champion. In fact, Neumann said his top five

wrestlers need to contend for individual national titles if the Huskers want to be in the team race at the end of the meet.

And Neumann has a group of five who should be very competitive. In addition to Thompson, 158-pounder Temoer Terry is ranked second with an 18-2 record, Ryan Tobin (at 190) and Tony DeAnda (134) are both ranked fourth nationally and Brad Canoyer is 11th at 118.

"As a team, we need Brad Canoyer, Tony DeAnda, Temoer Terry and Ryan Tobin, along with Tolly, to all make the strongest runs at the finals as they possibly can," Neumann said. "If these guys are up there, that's the only chance we have to give Iowa a run for the money.

"But if any one of them settles for a seventh or an eighth place finish, we might as well not even show up."

The Huskers could also have a couple of long-shots in Minneapolis. Neumann said 126-pounder Jeramie Welder is healthy after suffering through the year with an injured ankle. Welder was 18-7 heading into the Big Eight meet. ■ — Mark Derowitsch



Thompson is the favorite to repeat as heavyweight champion.

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James Sims' battle for the I-back position is only one of many that will keep Nebraska's spring lively again • Mike Babcock

EYES ON AN

The tenor of Tom Osborne's voice was one of unmistakable weariness, born of the non-stop demands placed on a coach whose teams have won back-to-back national championships.

"There have been an awful lot of people wanting to do this and that, and I'm trying to pace myself," Osborne said. "I've learned to say no. But you can't say no to everything."

Contrary to what you might have heard or read, few major college coaches — particularly those who have achieved his level of success — are more accommodating than Osborne.

His responses to reporters' questions aren't always the most scintillating, for example. And they can, on occasion, be offered somewhat grudgingly. But Osborne remains remarkably accessible to the public as well as to the news media. And that accessibility, in the wake of the two national titles, has exacted a considerable toll on the nation's winningest active major college football coach. "By the time recruiting was over, I was pretty

tired," he said.

With spring practice a month away, he still sounded tired. "But I'll be ready for spring practice," Osborne said.

He and his assistants had just finished looking at "cut-up," films of last season's games in preparation for spring drills, which are scheduled to begin on March 25 and conclude with the Red-White intrasquad game at Memorial Stadium on April 20.

Despite the Cornhuskers' accomplishments the last two (or three, really) seasons, this spring's practices will be no different than those in the past. The coaches will identify replacements for the starters who have completed eligibility. They will try to develop depth at positions where starters return. And they will evaluate the young players who are eager to prove themselves. Those constants always produce spirited competition during the spring. That's why "spring is always fun," said offensive line coach Milt Tenopir.

Such competition, involving similarly talented ath-



OPENING

letes, is among the keys to Nebraska's success. Even veteran players must push themselves or risk losing their positions on the depth chart.

That will be most obvious at I-back, Osborne said, where Ahman Green, the heir apparent to Lawrence Phillips, will be challenged by Damon Benning and James Sims.

Green was the first freshman in Cornhusker history to rush for 1,000 yards. But Benning, who will be a senior in the fall, has experience, and Sims, a walk-on, might well be the best all-around athlete on the team. Even if they don't unseat him at the top of the depth chart, Benning and Sims are bound to make Green an even better player by not allowing him to relax. That's how Nebraska's system works. Players who aren't willing to accept a challenge soon fall by the wayside.

That's true regardless of a player's position. Jesse Kosch punted well last season. But he'll be challenged in the spring by redshirt freshman Andy Bilanzich. Place-kicker Kris Brown had an outstanding freshman season.

But he'll have to keep his focus during the spring to keep his job.

The highest-profile competition in the spring will involve the quarterbacks. Even Osborne acknowledges that. With Tommie Frazier and Brook Berringer finished, the No. 1 job is wide open, with five candidates trying to establish their claim (see related story on page 16).

Matt Turman has the most experience, and even that is negligible. Scott Frost will go through his second spring of practice at Nebraska after transferring from Stanford and sitting out last season. Monte Christo, Frankie London and Jeff Perino will participate in spring drills for the first time.

Last spring, the offensive line had to be rebuilt, with four of five interior starters to be replaced. This spring, Tenopir must replace only two interior starters, center Aaron Graham and guard Steve Ott.

That's no small task, to be sure. Graham started for three seasons and established himself as one of the best centers ever at Nebraska. The plan is to move Aaron

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....and on Sunday, we rest.

Taylor, the starting left guard last season as a redshirt sophomore, to center, where he will compete with Matt Vrzal and Josh Heskew for the No. 1 job.

Taylor, who took some snaps last fall, "is a very intelligent player," Tenopir said. "Aaron has as much football common sense as anyone we've got."

Chris Dishman, the starting left tackle in 1995, will move to left guard. And Adam Treu, the third or "swing" tackle as a junior, will move up to the No. 1 left tackle spot to begin the spring. Jon Zatechka, Ott's backup last season, will start the spring as the No. 1 guard on the right side. That way there will be "five people who have played a lot of football in the line to start the spring," said Tenopir, who can then turn his attention to developing the always important depth.

Among the players who will get that opportunity are tackles Kory Mikos and Fred Pollack and guards Mike Van Cleave and Matt Hoskinson, lower-unit back-ups last fall, as well as redshirts Jeff Clausen, James Sherman, Marcus Johnson and Adam Julch, who is coming off back surgery. "We don't know whether he'll be ready for spring," Tenopir said.

Mark Gilman must be replaced at tight end. But Tim Carpenter, Sheldon Jackson and Vershan Jackson all were in the rotation last season and provide a solid base for double-digit tight end alignments.

The situation is such that Luis Almanzar, a 1995 scholarship recruit from Jersey City, N.J., who didn't enroll until second semester, will begin the spring as a defensive tackle, according to defensive coordinator Charlie McBride. Almanzar would have been a tight end had he played offense.

Almanzar weighs 245 pounds, but "we think he can get to 265," McBride said. Adjusting to defensive tackle will be difficult. "When you put his hand on the ground (in a lineman's stance), it's a whole different world. He probably won't like it at first. But he's got great feet, and we know he's a tough kid."

Almanzar will need time to become comfortable. Brendan Holbein and Jon Vedral will not. Last season's starters at split end (Reggie Baul) and wingback (Clester Johnson) have completed their eligibility. But Holbein and Vedral "were interchangeable" with Baul and Johnson, Osborne said.

NEEDING ANSWERS

Nebraska's wish list for spring includes finding a new quarterback, shuffling offensive linemen and selecting a middle linebacker

The No. 1 question on the minds of most fans as Nebraska begins spring practice in preparation for making a run at an unprecedented third national championship almost certainly is: Who will emerge at quarterback?

That question also was the most prominent last spring. The difference was, two proven performers were competing for the job. Everyone knew either Tommie Frazier or Brook Berringer would establish himself as the starter, with the other as an experienced backup.

Even though the question is the same, the situation is much different this spring. Tom Osborne will evaluate five athletes who have one start between them. Senior Matt Turman stepped up two seasons ago against Kansas State. Three of the others have yet to take a snap at Nebraska (see related story on page 16).

The quarterback competition might attract the most attention from fans. But there are other significant questions to be answered this spring.

• **How will Aaron Graham, a three-year starter at center, be replaced?**

The answer probably will be: With some shifting of players.

The plan going into the spring, according to offensive line coach Milt Tenopir, is to move Aaron Taylor from guard to center and move Chris Dishman from tackle to guard, with Adam Treu stepping up at the tackle spot vacated by Dishman. Treu was the "swing" tackle last season.

Jon Zatechka, another top backup on last year's team, will replace Steve Ott at the other guard, which means "we'll have five kids starting in there (the offensive interior) with experience," Tenopir said.

The question about replacing Graham probably will be answered in that way. But, as is the case with any experiment, Tenopir won't know for sure until spring practice concludes.

• **Is Ahman Green ready to step up at I-back?**

Green had a remarkable freshman season, working his way up on the depth chart to become the starter after Lawrence Phillips was suspended. He was the first Cornhusker freshman to rush for 1,000 yards; he gained 1,086. He was first-team All-Big Eight according to the conference coaches.

Green proved to be an extraordinary talent, and it's reasonable to assume he'll be even better with a season of collegiate experi-

Ahman's not green anymore.



Aaron Taylor is the center of attention.

ence. Early indications are that he didn't let his success last fall go to his head. He was well-prepared for the physical testing that precedes the winter conditioning program.

Green ran the 40-yard dash in 4.34 seconds, the second-fastest time in Nebraska football history. Keith Jones, another graduate of Omaha Central High School, ran a 4.33. Green ran an even faster 40 on test day, but his 4.32 was disallowed.

• **Who plays middle linebacker with Phil Ellis and Doug Colman both gone?**

The solution to this problem probably will be two-fold, according to linebackers coach Craig Bohl. Jon Hesse, who will be a senior on the field and a second-semester graduate student in the classroom this fall, finally will get an opportunity to start after contributing as a backup and special teams player. And Jay Foreman, who started every game at strongside linebacker as a redshirt freshman last season, will get a look in the middle.

Hesse was moved from middle linebacker to the outside last spring. But after Ellis suffered a broken foot in practice before the Washington State game, he alternated with Colman in the middle.

• **What freshman redshirts will emerge in the spring?**

This question involves even more speculation than the others.

Quarterbacks Frankie London and Jeff Perino are candidates, of course. Jeff Clausen, an offensive lineman from Dixon, Ill., "has the spunk we're looking for," Tenopir said.

Kareem Sears, a scholarship linebacker from Enid, Okla., might play in the middle or he might fit better on the outside. Julius Jackson, a scholarship recruit from Gainesville, Texas, is ready to compete at middle linebacker after increasing his weight from just over 200 pounds to nearly 230, according to Bohl.

Tony Ortiz, a linebacker from Waterbury, Conn., was one of the most publicized recruits a year ago. But he "was skinny and weak in the fall,"

said outside linebackers coach Tony Samuel. Ortiz suffered from vertigo in the summer and weighed barely 200 pounds when he reported.

If Foreman remains in the middle, Ortiz could be alternating with Jamel Williams at the weakside linebacker.

Any of the redshirt freshman, scholarship or walk-on players, could emerge during spring practice. It is equal opportunity. And that's what makes it interesting. ■



Finally healthy, Ortiz is ready to play.



Kenny Cheatham, Lance Brown, Jeff Lake and Riley Washington also have experience at the two wide receiver positions, with David Reddick and Shevin Wiggins among the other young players there.

Walk-ons Brian Schuster and Joel Makovicka played as backups to Jeff Makovicka at fullback last season. So, again, the Cornhuskers have experience, even though the starter is gone.

McBride and the defensive coaches must identify four starters to go with the seven returning. "Our No. 1 priority is the secondary and then, probably, middle linebacker," said McBride.

"Corner is a little bit of a concern," Osborne said.

Tyrone Williams, a three-year starter at cornerback, has completed his eligibility, and Leslie Dennis, one of the candidates to step up at cornerback, is recovering from knee surgery. "So we'll have to see how

that goes," said Osborne.

Michael Booker, the outstanding defensive player in the Fiesta Bowl game, returns at the other corner, and Mike Fullman has a year's experience after transferring from Rutgers.

Jerome Peterson, a freshman red-shirt in the fall, is one of the newcomers who will get a good look during the spring. There's enough uncertainty about depth in the secondary that incoming scholarship freshmen Mike Brown and Ralph Brown will get a good look in the fall, McBride said. "Those guys fit in where depth is a concern. They have a chance. But if they need a (red-shirt) year, we'll give 'em a year."

Mike Minter returns at rover, and Octavious McFarlin gives Nebraska a proven backup. Tony Veland's job as the starting free safety probably will belong to Eric Stokes or Eric Warfield.

In addition to Minter, Stokes,

Booker and Fullman, Chad Blahak, Mike Roberts and Dave Alderman will be seniors in the fall. Roberts will get a look at rover in the spring, as will freshman walk-on Greg List. Blahak and Alderman are cornerbacks.

Walk-ons Jeff Wells and Eric Walther are among the other young players who will have an opportunity to assert themselves this spring, both as free safeties, according to Darlington.

Eric Johnson, an outstanding high school defensive back from Phoenix, Ariz., who didn't meet freshman eligibility requirements and can't participate in spring practice, also is expected to join in the cornerback competition in the fall.

The solution to the problem created by the loss of middle linebackers Phil Ellis and Doug Colman is similar to the one in replacing Graham at center. Jay Foreman, who started every game at strongside linebacker,

Understanding hard work got him a scholarship Adam Treu refuses to rest on last year's success as he battles for a starting job on the offensive line

Treu To Nature

Adam Treu was eating at the training table along with teammates Aaron Taylor and Chris Dishman when Tom Osborne brought up the subject as he passed by. "You're lucky to be here," Osborne told Treu.

If Treu hadn't excelled in basketball at Lincoln Pius X High School, Nebraska probably wouldn't have been interested in him as a football player, Osborne said by way of explaining his remark.

"Coach Osborne was just giving me a hard time," Treu said recently.

Taylor, however, looked at Treu in disbelief. He thought Osborne was serious.

"Aaron was shocked, I think," said Treu, who admits to giving Osborne a hard time about something to initiate the good-natured exchange. "He (Taylor) didn't know Coach Osborne would joke with you like that."

Still, there was truth in what Osborne had said. Nebraska offered Treu, a multi-sport athlete at Pius X, an opportunity to walk-on after watching him play basketball. He moved well, and although he was light for a major college offensive lineman, the coaches could see the potential in his 6-foot-6 frame. He just needed to get in the weight room and fill out.

Nebraska stopped short of offering him a scholarship, however, encouraging him to walk-on. He would be given a scholarship if he made satisfactory progress during his first two years. Treu and his family negotiated the time he would be without a grant-in-aid from two years to one. Plus, the assurance was put in writing.

Even without that guarantee, though, "I'm sure I

would have come here anyway," Treu said. "I probably would have paid for all five years if I'd had to."

Treu has the essential characteristic of an in-state walk-on. He grew up a Cornhusker fan. His father, Dale, worked in the university maintenance department as a cabinet maker. On football Saturdays, Adam and his dad went to Memorial Stadium early in the morning to help set up folding chairs in the boxes that were once at field level. They also raised flags atop the pressbox.

Perhaps you've marveled at the police officers who climb the towers at the corners of the stadium and look down on the crowd during games? Well, Treu has been up there with his dad.

After games, Treu picked up empty plastic

A swing tackle last year, Adam Treu has a chance to become the Huskers' next walk-on success story.



will join Jon Hesse in the competition, with Jamel Williams moving up to replace Foreman.

"We're not at all displeased with what we've seen of Jon Hesse," Osborne said. But he would like to have at least two middle linebackers on whom the Cornhuskers can count. Among the other middle linebacker possibilities are Kareem Sears, Julius Jackson and Adam Skoda.

Tony Ortiz, a highly publicized 1995 scholarship recruit, appears to have emerged from the health problems that led to his redshirting in the fall and will compete for playing time at strongside linebacker.

The top two weakside linebackers return: Terrell Farley and Ryan Terwilliger. Farley, the Big Eight Defensive Newcomer of the Year and first-team Associated Press All-Big Eight, is still improving after transferring from Independence, Kan., Community College. This will

be his first spring at Nebraska.

"Without question, he's by far the best athlete we've had at linebacker since I've been here," said McBride.

The Cornhuskers are well-stocked with outside linebackers. Starters Jared Tomich and Grant Wistrom return, as do backups Chad Kelsay and Mike Rucker. They are a formidable quartet. And they will be joined by George Guidry, a scholarship recruit from Lake Charles, La., in the fall. Guidry is another of those who could play immediately, outside linebacker coach Tony Samuel said.

The other missing starter on defense will be tackle Christian Peter. The leading candidates for the job are Jeff Ogard and Larry Townsend, who is recovering from knee surgery. "We don't know if he'll be able to practice this spring," said McBride.

Scott Saltsman has experience at both tackle positions, and he could

beat everybody out.

Christian's brother, Jason, returns as the other starter. McBride would like to find at least one more tackle during the spring so the Cornhuskers would be two-deep with one swing player. Jason Wiltz is among the candidates for the fifth spot.

"Most of my scout team guys were walk-ons, so there aren't many surprises there. It's not like we've got anybody hidden," McBride said. "We want to leave Ogard where he is (nose tackle) and switch the others around. Jeff is such a big kid, who can be so dominant. He gets his hands up and can knock down passes. He just needs to work on some technique things. If he does, he can be like Christian."

Spring practice is a time when players such as Ogard show whether they can get the necessary technique things down and in so doing, step up a level. ■

cups discarded in the stands and went onto the field, to run and to collect the empty film containers left by newspaper photographers. He can't explain his fascination with the film containers. But his interest in Cornhusker football was obvious.

That doesn't mean his experiences at Nebraska have always been positive, however. Early on, his attitude wasn't the best, said Treu, who spent an obligatory apprenticeship on the scout team as a freshman red-shirt. During that time, he was too concerned about those around him. He would see a highly publicized scholarship recruit giving less than 100 percent in practice and give less himself.

Treu said he often thought: "If they're so great, why is everyone yelling at me to work hard? They're just being lazy. Why can't I be like that, too?"

Treu could have been like them, of course. Any player, scholarship or walk-on, can slack off in practice. He can choose what he wants to do. But his choice determines whether or not he plays. It doesn't take long to realize that at Nebraska, slackers fall by the wayside. And it never changes.

Treu, the Cornhuskers' swing tackle last season, will have an opportunity to become a starter this spring. Taylor is being moved from guard to center to help replace Aaron Graham. And Dishman is being moved from tackle to guard to replace Taylor.

Treu alternated with Dishman and Eric Anderson last season. He played as much as they did. He was considered a starter. But that doesn't allow him to relax in this, his final spring of practice.

"We've got good young guys coming up," said Treu. "The spring is a time to show what you've got, so I've got to try just as hard or harder to show them I still have

what it takes. It's like pro sports; you just don't get paid. There's always somebody behind you who can do it just as well or better."

What separates one player from another is dedication and commitment. Treu came to understand that with the help of former Cornhusker tight end Matt Shaw.

"Matt might not have been the best athletically, but he worked so hard," Treu said.

Shaw, a walk-on from Lincoln Northeast High School, was undersized and unappreciated by major college football recruiters. But his motivation was unquestioned. He set a standard for commitment during his five years at Nebraska.

Treu's attitude was shaped in workouts with Shaw. He came to realize that "there might be players with more ability than me who don't work at it as hard," said Treu.

"What if? What if? I never want to ask myself that. That's what Matt instilled in me."

He still talks regularly with Shaw, who is in medical school in Omaha. "Matt is more dedicated than anybody I've ever seen. He had all this Husker stuff at his house, and there was a sign on the back of the door to his room. He'd look at that sign every day," Treu said.

The sign said: "How bad do you want it?"

Treu has followed Shaw's lead and realized his dream of playing for the Cornhuskers. Oh yes, and the two share another characteristic. Shaw was injured during the football season his senior year in high school, so Nebraska's interest in him as a walk-on was based, in part, on the athletic skills he showed playing basketball.

Treu knows all about that.

"I've heard Coach Osborne mention on his TV show that I was a good basketball player with good feet and that I moved well. And then he says my football skills were OK, too," said Treu. "I'm like: 'Thanks a lot.'"

Treu was laughing. But he has appreciated the opportunity. ■

QB QUANDARY

**For the first time in 12 years,
Tom Osborne enters spring with no
idea who will run the team**

Tom Osborne rarely has been faced with such uncertainty going into spring practice. Almost always he has had at least one quarterback with significant experience in his system.

You would have to go back a dozen years to find a comparable situation. In the spring of 1984, Craig Sundberg, a redshirted sophomore, was Nebraska's only experienced quarterback. And even he hadn't played much during two seasons as a backup. Turner Gill, a three-time, first-team All-Big Eight selection, had played most of the time.

Sundberg's statistics to that point in his Cornhusker career were mod-

When Turner Gill's eligibility was used up, Osborne turned to redshirt sophomore Craig Sundberg (below) in the spring of 1984 to take the team.



est: 10-of-14 passing for 180 yards and two touchdowns, 116 yards and four touchdowns rushing. Walk-on Travis Turner, also a sophomore, had logged only seven varsity minutes the previous fall after traveling with the varsity but not taking a single snap during his freshman year. Clete Blakeman, a freshman, had worn an injury-forced redshirt in the fall of 1983. McCathorn Clayton and Jeff Taylor had played for the junior varsity as freshmen. They were tentatively slated for redshirts in the fall of 1984, depending on how spring practice went, of course.

Going into practice this spring, Matt Turman is the only quarterback with game experience. His cumulative statistics are remarkably similar to Sundberg's 12 springs ago. Turman has completed 11-of-25 passes for 169 yards and three touch-

downs and rushed for 116 yards and two touchdowns.

Turman has started a game, however, and Sundberg hadn't at that point. As a result, "Matt will probably start out at No. 1 (on the depth chart in the spring)," Osborne said.

Even if there were more experience at quarterback returning, the position still would be a focus of spring practice, with the departure of All-American Tommie Frazier. So here, briefly, are the players who will participate in this spring's drama (listed according to their eligibility status in the fall).

MATT TURMAN **5-11, 185, senior**

The "Turmanator" from Wahoo, Neb., played sparingly in nine games in 1995 after coming to the rescue of the 1994 national championship team in victories against Oklahoma State and Kansas State.





A former walkon, Matt Turman is the only returning quarterback with game experience as a Husker.

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He's not the biggest or the fastest of the quarterbacks. But he is a known quantity.

**SCOTT FROST
6-3, 215, junior**

Frost, a transfer from Stanford, is probably the pre-spring favorite to emerge as Frazier's successor. He was impressive in pre-winter conditioning tests, breaking Berringer's performance index record for quarterbacks.

Frost's 2,597 points in the performance index were third-most on the team. Only I-backs James Sims and Ahman Green scored more. And Sims' total was a Cornhusker team record.

Frost's best time in the 40-yard dash was 4.69. By comparison, Frazier's best 40 time was 4.61. Frost's 3.90 in the pro agility run was a record for Nebraska quarterbacks. The previous record was held by Frazier.

"Scott has excellent ability, everything you need to be a great player," said Osborne.

Like Turman, Frost was coached by his father, Larry, at Wood River, Neb., High School. Larry Frost played wingback for Bob Devaney at Nebraska in the late 1960s.

Scott Frost went through practice last spring, finishing with an impressive performance in the Red-White intrasquad game, in front of a crowd estimated at 40,000. He completed 10-of-17 passes for 158 yards and three touchdowns in leading the White team to a 40-34 victory. "Scott picked it up very quickly," Osborne said afterward.

Frost was recruited to Stanford by Bill Walsh, who described him as having the potential to play quarterback in the National Football League. He also played defensive back during his two seasons at Stanford.

He spent most of the fall running the scout team in practice.

**MONTE CRISTO
6-0, 195, sophomore**

Christo has become the forgotten man at quarterback, after walking on from Kearney, Neb., High School, where he was a first-team Super-State defensive back as a senior.

Christo was chosen the South

team's most valuable player in Nebraska's annual Shrine Bowl all-star game as a quarterback. It was as a quarterback that his Cornhusker career began even though there had been talk of him playing defensive back.

He was included on the 80-player travel roster for the Kickoff Classic as a freshman in 1994, but the plan was he would redshirt after he suffered a torn ligament in a hand during practice. That plan had to be scrapped midway through the season, however. Christo had just returned to practice the week before the Missouri game at Columbia, Mo., and was included on the travel roster as the third quarterback because of Frazier's being sidelined indefinitely by blood clots.

Christo was forced to play the final two minutes of the Missouri game after Turman suffered a shoulder injury on what appeared to be a late hit near the Nebraska sideline. Fearing that Turman might be sidelined for some time and not wanting

Scott Frost will need to duplicate his strong performance from last spring to win the job.



With Frazier sidelined by a blood-clot problem and Brook Berringer suffering from a partially collapsed lung, Turman came off the bench in the Oklahoma State game and directed the Cornhuskers to three second-half touchdowns in a 32-3 victory. The score was 9-3 when he entered the game.

The next week, Turman started and played most of the first half of a 17-6 victory against No. 16-ranked Kansas State at Manhattan, Kan. When Turman left the game, the score was 7-6. The Cornhuskers had all of the points they really needed by then.

Turman walked on at Nebraska, so his determination is unquestioned. His father, Tim, was his coach at Wahoo Neumann High School, so there is no doubt about his understanding of the game. In addition, he is an intelligent player. He has made the Phillips 66 Big

Bob Berry

Bob Berry

to put Berringer back in the game, Osborne sent Christo onto the field, thereby canceling the redshirt in 1994.

Christo missed practice last spring because of lower back surgery, and his injury problems continued in the fall, when he suffered torn knee ligaments on the first day of practice and again was sidelined. He had a scholarship for a semester, Osborne said. And "he'll probably be put on scholarship again."

The question is whether he can remain healthy enough to keep it. Because of surgery to repair the injured knee, "he's a little 'iffy' " for this spring, said Osborne.

FRANKIE LONDON 6-0, 175, freshman

London was promoted from the scout team to No. 3 on the depth chart five games into last season because of a Berringer knee problem. London practiced with the top units only briefly, however, thereby preserving a redshirt. He was a

With Frazier (15) and Berringer (18) gone, Turner Gill will look to Frost (16), Turman (11), London (12) and Perino (9).

SuperPrep All-American as a senior at LaGrange High School in Lake Charles, La. He was rated by the magazine as the nation's No. 5 high school quarterback recruit.

London was 85-of-169 passing for 1,888 yards and 18 touchdowns as a senior. He also rushed for nearly 800 yards and nine touchdowns in leading his team to the semifinals of the state's large-school playoffs.

London was heavily recruited, drawing more than passing interest from such schools as Notre Dame, Texas A&M, Baylor and UCLA as well as Louisiana State. But he made only one official recruiting visit: Nebraska.

He was a sprinter in high school, running the 100 meters in 10.6 seconds.

London might be limited in what he can do during spring practice, according to Osborne. He underwent shoulder surgery and "may not be able to participate in scrimmages," Osborne said.

JEFF PERINO 6-2, 195, freshman

Perino also has been slowed by injury. He missed fall camp while recovering from knee surgery after

playing in only four games as a senior at Durango, Colo., High School because of a dislocated kneecap.

He was impressive in those four games, however, completing 66-of-110 passes for 890 yards and seven touchdowns and rushing for 340 yards and seven touchdowns. In his final game before being sidelined, Perino passed for 351 yards.

Perino didn't play quarterback until his junior year in high school. He showed an aptitude for the position, though, passing for 1,800 yards in his first season in Colorado's second-largest classification. He also was an all-state punter as a junior.

An excellent student, Perino was recruited by Stanford, Washington, Arizona State and some Ivy League schools. The only school he visited besides Nebraska was Arizona State.

To conclude the comparison to 1984, Sundberg emerged from spring practice as the No. 1 quarterback. The Cornhuskers began the season at No. 2 in the Associated Press rankings and moved up to No. 1 before being upset at Syracuse in their final non-conference game. They also lost to Oklahoma, but finished No. 4 in the AP ratings.

Nebraska fans are hoping it will work out a little better than that in 1996. But a third national championship is a lot to ask of an inexperienced quarterback. ■



London's chances may be hurt because of his limited availability this spring.



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Car window stickers and stickers for notebooks and non-weathered materials are available for each championship team. The logo commemorating each championship season is also available as a collar/hat pin. Approximate size of both stickers is 5" x 3 1/2", while the pins are approximately 1" x 1". Stickers are \$1 each, pins are \$5.

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Erick Strickland couldn't hide the emotion when he was introduced before Nebraska's final regular-season game at the Devaney Sports Center. "It felt weird," he said afterward.

"It caught me off guard."

He was speaking figuratively, of course. He was arguably the best defender in Husker basketball history. Rarely was he caught off-guard.

"I didn't think my time would come that quick," he said.

Strickland was among five seniors introduced, along with their parents, that March afternoon. An audience of 11,259 applauded each one in turn. The Class of 1996 included: Terrance Badgett, Jaron Boone, Jason Glock, Strickland and Tom Wald.

The experience was bittersweet. Nebraska was in the throes of a nine-game losing streak. The Cornhuskers had seen the optimism of a 15-4 start transformed into a nightmare. Not since the 1962-63 season had a Nebraska basketball team suffered through more than nine consecutive losses.

The 1962-63 team tied a school record with 10 losses in a row.

But more about that later.

The five seniors started their final home game. Ordinarily, only Boone and Strickland started from that group. But freshman Tyronn Lue, the regular point guard, suggested the seniors be allowed to start, just before the Cornhuskers returned to the court after pre-game warm-ups.

Lue did so out of respect. Junior Mikki Moore thought about the same thing. "But Tyronn had enough guts to say it," Moore said.

Coach Danny Nee was persuaded by the response of the rest of the players. "I could tell by their voices they thought it was a good idea," he said.

Even though he hadn't intended to start the seniors, Nee was willing to try anything at that point. He was at wits' end. If Nebraska was to break the spell of nine losses, "I thought it was going to go through the seniors," he said.

It did, with a big contribution from Moore, who scored a career-high 20 points (on 8-of-12 shooting), pulled down a game-high nine rebounds and blocked two shots in a 70-66 victory against a Kansas State team that was playing for something other than pride: NCAA Tournament consideration.

The Cornhuskers should have



Bob Berry

EXHALE!

Nebraska breathed a sigh of relief as the 1996 regular season and 10-game losing streak ended

been playing for such consideration. In late January, they appeared to be NCAA Tournament bound, with an at-large bid for sure and possibly with the automatic bid that would come with winning the final Big Eight post-season tournament.

They had started conference play by winning three of their first four games, with the only loss coming in triple overtime at Oklahoma. A sub-head on a story in the March 1996

issue of *Huskers Illustrated* noted: "Nebraska is battling for an NCAA Tournament berth with desire and resiliency."

The Cornhuskers never lost that desire. But the resiliency disap-

One of the best defenders in Nebraska basketball history, senior Erick Strickland was caught off guard after being introduced for the final time.

peared, overnight. There were discipline problems and suspensions. There was a boycott of practice and a players' meeting with athletic director Bill Byrne. Nee was assailed in local newspaper columns. And the losses mounted.

The first of the nine came at home against Kansas, by 88-73. There was a 77-68 loss at Kansas State. Then surprising Iowa State left the Sports Center with a 75-65 victory. The Cornhuskers almost snapped out of their funk at Missouri, staging a dramatic second-half rally before losing 99-98. After that, however, the situation deteriorated rapidly, with losses to ISU (74-59) in Ames and to Oklahoma State (72-57) at the Sports Center.

Nebraska played well in losing to third-ranked Kansas at Lawrence, 81-71, then squandered a comfortable second-half lead in falling to Oklahoma 80-76 in overtime at the

Sports Center. At that point, the streak seemed to have a life of its own. It appeared the Cornhuskers might not win again. No matter what they did, the result was defeat. The last of the nine was to Colorado in Boulder, 78-64.

At 15-4, Nebraska was shooting 50.6 percent from the field, averaging 86.4 points per game and out rebounding its opponents. During the losing streak, the Cornhuskers shot 43.1 percent from the field, averaged 70.1 points and were out rebounded. The turnaround was dramatic, and inexplicable.

"It's smothering," Nee said of the losing. "It never goes away."

Moore extended the smothering metaphor after the Kansas State loss. "It feels great. It feels like we just exhaled," Moore said.

The Cornhuskers breathed a sigh of relief, even though they had to overcome some of the same prob-

lems that contributed to the losing streak. They shot only 37.7 percent from the field, and they were out rebounded 45-33. Even so, "we found a way to win," said Nee. "The team didn't do anything it wasn't capable of doing."

Nebraska finished the regular season at 16-13 and 4-10 in the conference, leaving the cellar to 3-11 Colorado. The finish was inappropriate. The Cornhuskers were much better than their record represented.

"There have been some ups and downs," Strickland said, reflecting on his Cornhusker career. "It has helped me learn to deal with adversity, to become a man. It really hurts losing. I got a taste of it (this season)."

Strickland, one of the best athletes ever to represent Nebraska in any sport, deserved better.

So did the rest of the team and the coaches. ■

Late season surge lengthens women's season

On The Rebound

The Nebraska women's basketball team deserved to be in the NCAA Tournament. Kansas coach Marian Washington offered that opinion, anyway, after her Jayhawks defeated Nebraska 65-61 in the semifinals of the last Big Eight Conference Tournament at the Bicentennial Center in Salina, Kan.

Their credentials certainly were in order. They finished the regular season with an 18-8 record by winning their last three games. Two of those three victories were against teams that had beaten them the first time through the conference schedule: nationally ranked Colorado and Iowa State.

Nebraska extended its winning streak to four by defeating Missouri for a third time, 70-64, in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament. But Kansas, which enjoyed something of a homecourt advantage in Salina, was too much for the Huskers, defeating them for a third time during the season.

Tamecka Dixon, the conference player of the year, scored the Jayhawks' final eight points and dribbled away precious seconds at the end to force Nebraska

Rapids, Iowa, hit a three-point shot with 23 seconds left to help the fourth-seeded Huskers hold off upset-minded Missouri.

University of Nebraska Sports Information



Junior Tina McClain supplied solid scoring all season including 25 points twice.

Galligan, who finished with 19 points, was one of three Nebraska players to score in double figures against the Tigers. Tina McClain, a junior from Montrose, Mo., tied her career-high with 25 points. And Anna DeForge, a 5-foot-11 sophomore from Niagara, Wis., contributed 16 points, including 10 in the second half, and 13 rebounds.

Galligan, McClain and DeForge, along with Pyra Aarden, a 6-foot-4 senior from Hudson, Wis., consistently led the Huskers in scoring during the 1995-96 season. Lis Brenden was the other senior starter, along with Galligan and, through much of the season, Aarden.

McClain, who played both small forward and shooting guard, made well over 50 percent of her shots from the field for the season. And Galligan provided a consistent outside threat, establishing a school record for three-point shots in a career.

Galligan made 6-of-10 on three-point shots during a 94-85 loss against Kansas at Lawrence in mid-February to break the previous record, set by Amy Stephens. Galligan finished the Kansas game with 38 points, the most by a Husker in four seasons. All-American Karen Jennings, who was chosen to the all-time All-Big Eight team, scored 39 points against Oklahoma in 1992. ■

The night before, Kate Galligan, a senior from Cedar



Foreign Feel

International student-athletes grab 14 of Nebraska's 19 gold medals in the final Big Eight championship

Don't be a xenophobe.

That would be an appropriate motto for Nebraska's Big Eight champion swimming and diving teams. They are truly international in their makeup.

The combined rosters of the Cornhuskers men's and women's teams include student-athletes from seven foreign countries. "We recruit a lot of foreign athletes," coach Cal Bentz said.

Those athletes have made significant contributions to Nebraska's swimming and diving success. Consider the results of the conference meet in Oklahoma City in mid-February:

Nine of the Huskers' 11 individual gold medals in the Big Eight women's competition were earned by foreign athletes. And five of eight individual men's titles were brought back to Lincoln by athletes whose homes are outside the United States. Plus, the Huskers' seven gold medal relay teams (men and women) were filled with foreign swimmers.

Recruiting outside the country is essential to Nebraska's success, according to Bentz, who is in his

20th year of coaching the Cornhusker men's team and his fourth year in charge of the women's program. The top high school recruits in the United States "aren't looking at Nebraska's (swimming and diving) tradition."

What they know about athletic

dent-athletes get here and the financial underpinning that football provides."

That recruiting approach has had considerable domestic appeal, too, as evidenced by the fact that 12 states besides Nebraska are represented on the Husker swimming and diving teams. And it also helps to explain how Nebraska has won 16 of the last 17 Big Eight men's swimming and diving championships and five of the last seven women's titles, including three in a row.

The Huskers' victory in the men's competition this season was probably the most surprising. Prior to the meet, the four conference coaches picked Kansas to win the title, after Iowa State ended Nebraska's streak at 15 a year ago. The Huskers were narrow favorites to win the women's title.

The conference meet was held over three full days and part of a

"We've always had a lot of conferences negatively recruit against us. This (going to the Big 12) is going to give us greater credence in swimming and diving."

— Cal Bentz



tradition is, "Nebraska plays football," said Bentz. "They're looking at Stanford, Texas, USC and Florida."

In contrast, foreign athletes "are more discriminating. They don't pick a school out of reputation only. They're interested in swimming and in what they'll be provided as students. The Big Eight hasn't been that strong nationally (in swimming and diving), so we don't sell tradition. We sell the ancillary support stu-

The South African combination of (left to right) Julia Russell and Penny Hayes helped Nebraska win the final Big Eight title.

fourth, and "traditionally, we have not swam the first day as well as we should. So we emphasized that we needed to come out and make a statement right away. We made a much stronger statement than we have in the past. And Kansas didn't expect that."

A good start was especially important to the women's competition. "It was really close," said Bentz. Nebraska edged the second-place Jayhawks 663-636.5.

The Huskers' Penny Heyns was chosen as the meet's outstanding female performer after breaking U.S. open and NCAA records in the 200-yard breaststroke on the final day of competition. She swam 2:08.90.

Heyns, a senior from Amanzimtoti, South Africa, also broke the Big Eight record in winning the 100-yard breaststroke and swam on gold medal 200 and 400 medley relays.

Mikaela Lauren, a sophomore from Stockholm, Sweden, won gold medals in the 100 butterfly, the 200 butterfly and the 400 IM and swam on the gold medal 800 freestyle relay. She had to swim the 400 IM and the 100 butterfly back-to-back. She couldn't participate in the medal presentation ceremony for the 400

IM because she was preparing to swim the 100 butterfly, making the double victory more remarkable.

Heather Park, a senior from Durban, South Africa, won the 500 freestyle and the 1,650 freestyle, in addition to swimming on the 800 freestyle relay. Janet Danburg, a sophomore from Council Bluffs, Iowa, won the 100 backstroke and the 200 backstroke and swam on the 200 and 400 medley relays. And Julia Russell, a junior from Durban, South Africa, won the 200 IM as well as swimming on three relays: the 200 freestyle, the 200 medley and the 400 freestyle.

Melanie Dodd, a senior from Sydney, Australia, swam on all five winning relay teams.

Juan Benavides, a junior from Madrid, Spain, led the Husker men, earning five gold medals. He won the 50, 100 and 200 freestyle events and swam on the 200 and 400 freestyle relays.

Travis Neimeyer, a senior transfer from Southern Illinois, won the 1-meter and 3-meter springboard diving gold medals and shared the award as Big Eight Diver of the Year.

Alex Shleifman, a sophomore from Ontario, Canada, won the 100 backstroke and swam on the win-

ning 400 freestyle relay. Conny Wennburg, a junior from Balsta, Sweden, won the 200 breaststroke. And Eric Rasser, a freshman from Sunrise, Fla., who was selected as the Big Eight men's Newcomer of the Year, won the 200 backstroke.

Earning the men's and women's championships was an appropriate way to finish Big Eight competition. Next season, Nebraska will become a part of the Big 12. The four Big Eight schools with varsity swimming and diving teams will be joined by teams from Texas and Texas A&M.

Texas has a rich tradition in swimming and diving, and Texas A&M has a new facility that ranks among the top three in the nation, according to Bentz. "To say we're going to continue the success we've had in the Big Eight, that's another story. We could be lower in the conference but better in the NCAA (championships)."

Membership in the Big 12 will help Nebraska's recruiting. "We've always had a lot of other conferences negatively recruit against us," Bentz said. "This is going to give us greater credence in swimming and diving."

The Huskers could have more appeal, both home and abroad. ■

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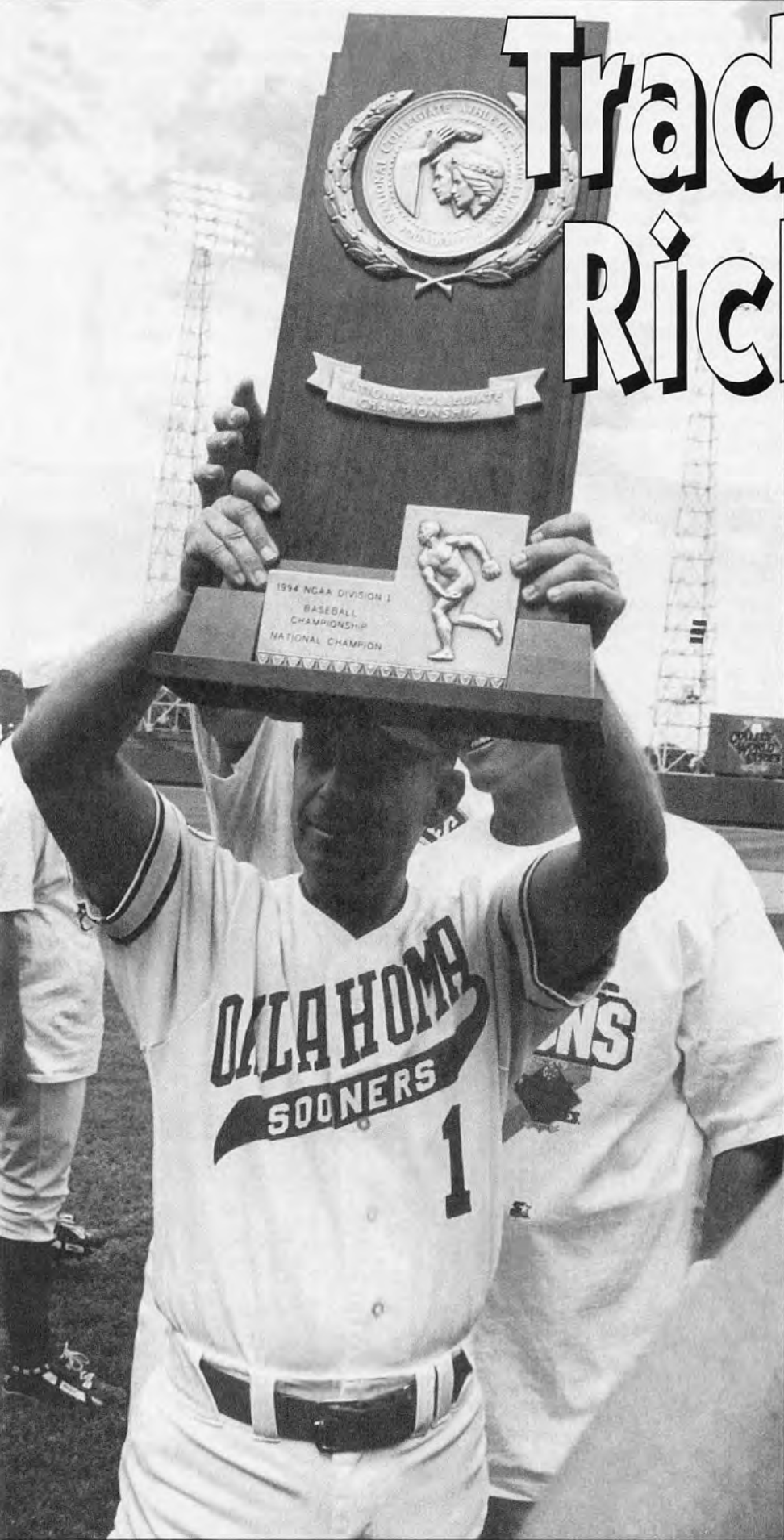
Weather. There's the rub. Baseball coaches in the Big 12 Conference can do nothing about it except talk. And there's been plenty of that over conference alignment.

John Sanders, the head coach at Nebraska, is quite familiar with the unpredictability of spring weather in the upper Midwest. The Cornhuskers' home-opener against Creighton had to be postponed on the day before it was to be played because of an unfavorable weather forecast. High temperatures were to be in the low 20s, with strong northwest winds driving the wind-chill index well below zero.

Even Ernie Banks would have been hesitant to play two, much less one, under those circumstances.

"We have weather," Sanders said recently. "In football, that's not a factor. In basketball, they play in arenas. But baseball is supposed to be

For one of the most prolific baseball conferences, conflicts over scheduling and alignment have caused bitter feuds before the first Big 12 pitch is thrown





Battle Torn

by **MIKE
BABCOCK**

played in above 50-degree weather."

Those accustomed to warmer climates would put that minimum temperature a little higher.

Anyway, on the day Nebraska was supposed to play Creighton, the high temperature in College Station, Texas, reached nearly 80 degrees, with high humidity and sunny skies. A hint of a breeze seemed to say, "Play ball."

"We had 99 degrees just a few

Including Oklahoma's College World Series titles in 1994 (left), Big 12 teams have won seven national championships.

Each Big 12 school will have to try and tame Texas A&M at Olsen Field (below), where the Aggies have won 78 percent of their games and averaged more than 2,700 fans since 1991.

days ago," Texas A&M Coach Mark Johnson said in reference to a mid-February day. He had made his point.

Sanders and Johnson are friends. And they are about to become Big 12 associates. But they are diametrically opposed on the issue of baseball scheduling for their new conference. Sanders is in favor of round-robin play among all 11 teams (Colorado does not compete in baseball). Johnson would prefer dividing the conference into north and south divisions, with limited inter-divisional play.

After all, that's how it will be done in football and basketball.

The northern schools agree, in principle at least, with Sanders. And all but one of the southern schools agree with Johnson. Baylor sided with the northern schools on the issue, meaning the conference has

Big 12 Civil War

Unlike football and basketball, Big 12 CEOs voted, 6-5, not to split baseball into a north and south divisional alignment with little or no cross-divisional play. The vote went in favor of a one-division format.

All five northern division schools (Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa State, Missouri and Kansas State) voted to play a non-divisional, round robin schedule giving those schools more games in better climates earlier in the season. Colorado doesn't participate in baseball.

The lone dissenting vote of southern division schools (Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Baylor) came from the Bears, the traditionally weakest baseball school from the division.

The Big 12 Conference schedule will consist of each team playing 33 conference games, one three game series against each team.

The Big 12 Conference tournament will simply seed the top teams in order of finish.

A divisional setup would have seen a team visit its divisional foes once and hosted the division opposition once with limited or no cross-divisional play. A conference tournament under this scenario would have placed the top three teams in each division in the playoff with two additional teams being placed in as wild cards.

A divisional format may be approved for future seasons depending on how next season's non-divisional format is accepted. ■



tentatively adopted the full round-robin format for schedules in the 1997 season.

The vote was 6-5. So had the vote been divided along geographical lines, the southern division would have carried it.

"I was surprised by the vote," said Johnson, whose surprise was a result of more than just the fact that Baylor voted with the northern schools. "If I were in the northern division, I would have sprinted for divisional play. I don't understand why they wouldn't want divisional play."

Johnson would have chosen that, with limited inter-divisional play so that "no one would feel segregated." Each team would play two inter-

one division but were stronger than teams that finished higher in the other division would be left out of the tournament. And even though the NCAA selection committee doesn't require participation in conference post-season tournaments in determining at-large bids, it could be a factor.

The Pacific-10 Conference, which is spread out geographically like the Big 12, has a north-south divisional alignment for baseball. The Six-Pac southern division includes Arizona, Arizona State, USC, UCLA, Stanford and California.

The Pac-10's northern baseball division includes Washington, Washington State, Oregon State and Portland State, which is only a member of the Pac-10 in baseball. A year ago, Gonzaga and Portland also competed in the northern division. (Oregon hasn't fielded a baseball team since the early 1980s.)

The six southern schools play three-game home-and-home series with each other, and the four northern schools play four-game home-and-home series with each other, with the divisional winners meeting in a three-game playoff to determine the Pac-10's automatic NCAA qualifier.

The championship playoff was

resurrected last season. There is no provision for inter-divisional games, and the few that are scheduled are treated as non-conference games.

Those who favor limited divisional play in the Big 12 do so for economic reasons. Obviously, travel costs can be reduced significantly. Plus, divisional matchups are likely to be more attractive for southern division teams.

For example, it would be more appealing for Texas to play two series each season with Texas A&M, home-and-home, than to play one series with the Aggies and one series with, say, Iowa State. Then, if Texas was to travel all the way to Ames, Iowa, and not be able to play because of inclement weather . . . well, you get the idea.

Distance also is a factor because of travel time. Student-athletes are forced to miss more classes than they would if they were playing only divisional opponents, closer to home.

With divisional play, "the southern schools could reduce their costs and generate revenue," Sanders said. "They view it as a tremendous marketing opportunity. And I don't blame them. But the credibility of the league would suffer. Are we talking economics or credibility?"

"The credibility of the league would suffer (with division play). Are we talking economics or credibility?"



John Sanders, Nebraska head coach

divisional series, one home and one on the road. Then the top three finishers in each division and two wild-card teams would compete in a post-season tournament to determine the conference's automatic NCAA qualifier.

If all 11 teams weren't involved in round-robin play, Sanders' next choice would be "mandatory inter-divisional play."

"Mandatory," he said by way of emphasis. "We could live with divisional play then. Or the third thing would be, if we couldn't have either of the first two, then we should zone it and have a conference tournament with an equal number of teams from the north and south."

Without wildcards as well, however, teams that finished lower in

Winning Is Everything



Texas head coach Cliff Gustafson is the winningest active coach in college baseball.

Three Big 12 coaches rank in the top 10 in wins among active coaches — the most of any conference.

1. Cliff Gustafson, Texas	1,394-356
2. Gene Stephenson, Wich. State	1,004-309
3. Gary Ward, Oklahoma State	911-295
4. Mike Martin, Florida State	874-296
5. Mark Jackson, Pittsburgh	431-150
6. Skip Bertman, LSU	579-220
7. Dick Rockwell, LeMoyne	740-290
8. Mark Johnson, Texas A&M	500-200
9. Ray Tanner, N.C. State	359-154
10. Rick Jones, Tulane	247-111

as of Feb. 18, 1996

Facilities

Not only is the weather better among southern division schools, so are the stadiums. Southern division stadiums are 56-percent larger than northern division fields.

Team	Stadium	Capacity
Baylor	Ferrell Field	1,600
Iowa State	Capt. Timm Field	3,000
Kansas	Hoglund-Maupin	1,320
Kansas State	Myers Field	5,000
Missouri	Simmons Field	1,800
Nebraska	Beltzer Stadium	1,500
Oklahoma	Mitchell Park	2,380
Oklahoma State	Reynolds Stadium	3,821
Texas	Disch-Falk Field	7,000
Texas Tech	Dan Law Field	5,000
Texas A&M	Olsen Field	7,053

"It's a very volatile situation, a real hot issue. I'm sure the (Big 12) athletic directors have spent more time on baseball than they ever dreamed they would."

Many problems still must be solved. For example, when the first round-robin schedules were announced, Oklahoma would have gone six consecutive weekends without a home series.

From the last week in March until the first week in May, the Sooners would have played on the road every weekend but one.

And on that weekend, they would have been off as far as conference series were concerned.

Oklahoma coach Larry Cochell described the proposed schedule as "ridiculous." He was being generous.

Texas coach Cliff Gustafson used that same adjective to describe the Longhorns' proposed conference itinerary in March of 1997. They were being asked to play three road series during the month: at Kansas, at Nebraska and at Iowa State. The odds that all of those games could have been played were slim.

The mid-week conference series forced by inter-divisional play also are a consideration as far as Johnson is concerned. "I don't favor mid-week games at all," he said. "With 11.7 scholarships (the NCAA maximum for baseball), you just don't have enough pitchers for mid-week games."

Because of the weather, southern-division schools can start playing earlier in the year.

As a result, they could spread out their schedules to eliminate the need for mid-week series. But with a later start forced by the greater unre-

dictability of northern weather, mid-week games are inevitable if Big 12 teams are to play a full round-robin inter-divisional schedule.

The Big 12 will give inter-divisional play a try in 1997. Probably. Conference CEOs haven't distinguished themselves by their consistency. They might rethink the situation before next spring. "There's nothing set in stone," said Sanders.

"I hope it changes," Johnson said. "Why wait? If we start out one way and do something extremely expensive, it increases the chances of the CEOs making some cuts (in baseball). I'd rather they address it (the economic issue) right away."

The Southwest Conference is steeped in baseball tradition. It has been a "magical baseball conference," according to Johnson. But the economics of major college athletics have forced an end to the Southwest Conference. The same is true of the Big Eight, which has had to give up its autonomy in order to survive.

Merging with the four Texas schools "really makes it an elite conference," said Sanders. The decision to play a full inter-divisional schedule "was life-saving for the northern schools," he said. "Otherwise, it would have been: Go off and behave yourselves. We'll check you later."

Sanders and Gustafson discussed the situation recently. "I told Cliff, 'You'd rather die a slow and agoniz-

Most games between northern Big 12 schools will not feature such pleasant weather as this 1995 game in Lincoln.

ing death than play in Lincoln in April.' He basically agreed," Sanders said. "Like Bob Devaney once said, 'The only three things wrong with Nebraska are December, January and February.'"

From a baseball coach's point of view, that list might as well include March and, possibly, April, too. It has been known to snow in Nebraska, on rare occasions, in early April.

"I'm excited about the people we'll get to play," Johnson said, somewhat diplomatically. "New things are always fun. We've never played in Lincoln."

His Aggies will need to pack carefully for their trip north. You never can tell what the weather will be. ■

History Lesson

When the Big 12 Conference begins play in 1996, it will immediately become one of the premier conferences in college baseball.

Big 12 teams have won seven NCAA championships, second only to the Pac-10 South Division's 19 title winning teams.

Team	CWS Titles	Top-4 Finish
Baylor	0	1
Oklahoma	2	2
Oklahoma State	1	11
Missouri	0	3
Texas	4	19



Bob Berry

Cleaning UP

**Motivated by being snubbed
in last year's MLB draft, Mel Motley is
making opponents pay**

Junior college transfers often spend a season adjusting to the consistently better competition confronting them in major college athletics. That's true, whatever the sport.

But Mel Motley's first season with the Nebraska baseball team was an exception. In fact, it was a dramatic exception.

A year ago, Motley hit .357, with seven home runs and 58 RBI. He stole 13 bases in 15 attempts. He scored at least one run in 23 of the last 27 games. And he was chosen to the All-Big Eight Tournament team, after going 8-for-13 and scoring six runs. "He jumped right in," coach John Sanders said recently.

To understand how impressive Motley's rookie season at Nebraska was, consider that he batted just under .300 during his two seasons at Riverside, Calif., Community College. He hit .298 as a freshman, improving to .301 as a sophomore and earning all-conference honorable mention.

Motley's junior college credentials were solid, but hardly spectacular. As a result, he didn't attract a lot of attention from major college recruiters. "We were the ones banging on his door," said Sanders. "When we turned around, there weren't many people standing behind us."

Sanders became interested in Motley, a rangy,

twice-drafted outfielder from Riverside, while scouting several other junior college players on a trip to talent-rich southern California. Sanders liked Motley's athletic ability, combined with his size — he stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 185 pounds.

"He was a projection," Sanders said. "We thought he was someone who wasn't yet performing close to where he could be. He was an athlete, a basketball-build type of guy."

Motley also proved to be a man of his word. A Riverside teammate committed to the Cornhuskers, then went elsewhere, said Sanders. "Mel stuck with his commitment."

Quality of character can never be underestimated. Neither can enthusiasm. Motley "has a tremendous spirit about playing the game. He's a lot of fun to coach," Sanders said.

A lot of people didn't think he could succeed at Nebraska or in any other major college program for that matter, said Motley, a communications major who is looking to law school as a means of getting into the entertainment industry.

His dream job would be as a record company executive. He has a cousin in film school at USC and another who manages and produces a musical group.

"I'm trying to get an internship (in that area),"

"(Motley) has a tremendous spirit about playing the game. He's a lot of fun to coach."

— John Sanders



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Motley said.

Those career plans could be put on hold, however, if he were to get a chance to play professionally. He has been drafted by the New York Yankees (in the 32nd round) and the Cincinnati Reds (in the 39th round). "Any time you get drafted, it's exciting," he said. But neither of the teams "offered me anything too appealing."

Despite his numbers, Motley wasn't drafted last spring. "I was surprised," said Sanders.

"I was disappointed," Motley said. "To some extent, I still am."

Not being drafted after his junior season has served to motivate Motley, who has picked up this spring where he left off at the Big Eight Tournament in Oklahoma City last May.

He makes good contact and has occasional power, qualities that serve him well as the Cornhuskers' cleanup hitter. "We've got solid guys in the middle of the order," said Sanders, who has moved sophomore Todd Sears from the No. 5 spot to No. 3 this season, with senior Matt Meyer batting fifth.

He's comfortable batting fourth, Motley said. But then, "I'd be comfortable hitting No. 9, too. As long as I'm playing somewhere, I'll be comfortable."

Motley isn't as surprised as oth-

Originally a projection, Motley made the jump from junior college to Division I-A baseball with little problem.

Bob Berry

ers about his successful transition from junior college to Nebraska. For one thing, he now wears contact lenses, and "I'm seeing the ball better," he said. "I'd never had my eyes checked before. I had a stigmatism."

For another thing, "this is a good hitting school." Sanders teaches his hitters to be aggressive, "but to swing with some control, be smart," said Motley. "That's how they've approached it since I've been here, anyway. It's not too complicated."

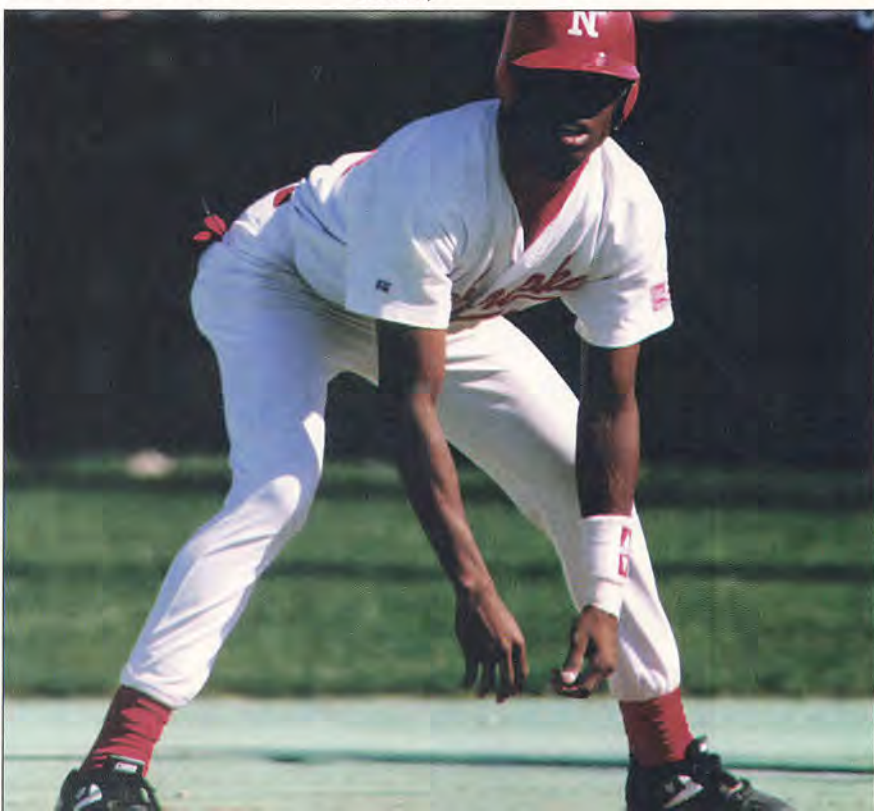
Motley said he also has benefited from Nebraska's cutting-edge strength and conditioning program as well as from observing former Cornhusker teammate Darin Erstad last season. Erstad was the first player picked in the major league draft.

Erstad has been invited to the California Angels' spring training camp, after hitting .363 at the Class A level during his first summer as a professional. At worst, he'll begin his second season with the Angels' Triple-A Pacific Coast League team in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

"I learned a lot from watching Darin," said Motley. "I've changed some things in my swing (as a result)."

But mostly, he has tried to copy the way Erstad went about preparing to play, "his work ethic. Darin didn't take anything for granted. That rubs off. You either jump aboard or get rolled over," Motley said.

It should be obvious which of those things he has done. ■



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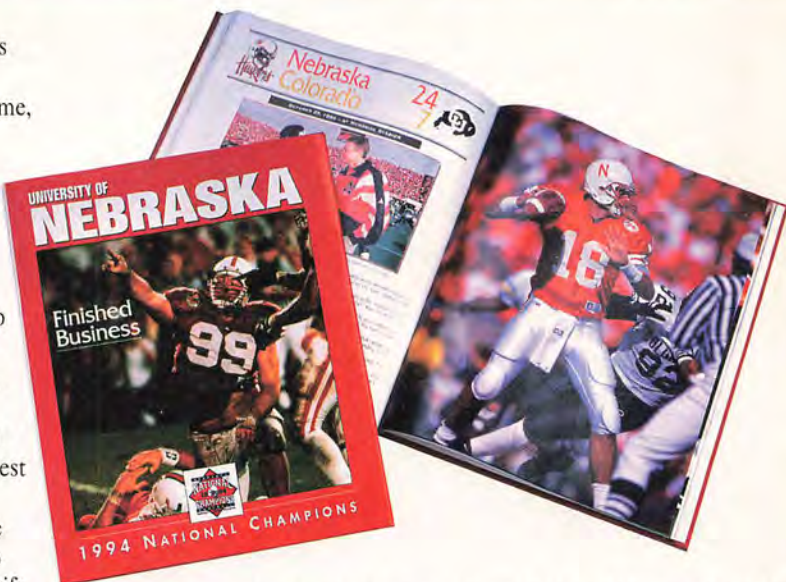
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